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Two LETTERS to Dr. Benjamin Calamy,

ONE IN

English, the other in Latine,

By *Thomas De Laune*, upon his Imprisonment in *Newgate*, for the *Answer* given at the said Dr. *Calamy's* Call, to his Sermon enticuled, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, in a late Piece called, *A Plea for the Non-conformists*, &c.

SIR;

IN your printed Sermon, Intituled, *Scrupulous Consciences*, you know you gave a fair Invitation to such as differ from you, to examine what each Party (viz. *Conformists* and *Non-conformists*) say for themselves, with respect to the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* which the Guides of the Church impose on their Members, and by penal Laws upon their *Protestant* fellow Subjects, the *Non-conformists*. — Without doubt, your Call to such, pre-supposed a *Reply*, by which you expected that there may be either an Opportunity given to you and your Brethren, to rectifie what *scrupulous Consciences* mis-understand, or that there may be some Relaxation procured, of the severity they undergo, if their dissent appears to be warranted by that only Rule of

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Faith, which Dr. *Stillingfleet*, and other Eminent *Conformists*, call the Bible.

If you did not expect an *Answer*, or thought that none for fear of the *Act of Uniformity*, *&c.* would make any Return to your Call, what can a man of Reason judge, but that it was a florid Declamation, or a triumphant Harangue, a meer Mockery & ensnaring of poor scrupulous Consciences, when they must be so muzled, that they must not exhibit the Causes of their Doubts. *Sir*, you know that 'tis unequal to gag the *Respondent*, when the *Opponent's* Mouth is at liberty, or to manacle the *Assaulted*, when the *Challenger* flourishes a menacing Sword.

Upon that publick Call of yours, I adventured to examine (with the most diligent search I could make) what each of the said Parties say for themselves; and this not out of any Litigious Principle (that *pruritus disputandi*) now too fatally grown Epidemical, but to give such as are concerned, occasion to investigate these disputed matters to the very Foundation, to the clearing up of Truth in a Juncture when it can never be more seasonable. What was digested, was intended to be sent you in a *Manuscript*, with some modest Inferences and Inquiries; but upon Re-collection I judg'd it would more answer your end, viz. *publick Information*, to have such Arguments as are producible by the *Dissenters*, as publick as the Invitation you gave them from *Pulpit* and *Press*, it being equal that the *Answer* should be as spreading as the *Objection*.

I am far from the vanity of pretending to be your Competitor in the Faculties of the Schools; I cannot judge of them any otherwise than as unserviceable to Christian Religion, unless tinctured with that Grace, derivative only from the Sanctifier of all Gifts, which I hope you partake of.

I am one of the meanest of the Flock, yet not below the Regards of the Shepherd of Souls, who is no Respecter of Persons, and whose Example such as call themselves his Ambassadors,

dors, ought to follow. And therefore though ſome, who pin their Faith upon *Canonical* Sleeves, may cenſure me, for oppoſing (or, if I may uſe a *Military Metaphor*, taking up the Gantlet againſt) a man of your Figure; yet I can take up my ſatisfaction in this, that it was not *Pride*, nor a *Popular Itch*, much leſs the love of a Priſon, influenced me to become an Anſwerer of your *ſcrupulous Conſcience*.

I could heartily wiſh (as a mercy to theſe Nations) that all Religious Differences were compoſed by Evangelical Rules, and and that all who own the Name of Chriſt would ſerve him with one Heart, and with one Soul, and not tear each other to pieces, which by conſequence muſt expoſe them as a Prey to ſuch as gape for their Deſtruction.

If the Sanctions of Chriſt in the Old and New-Teſtament ought to regulate the Modes of his Worſhip, and that we are under an indiſpenſible Obligation to obey that *Magna Charta* of Heaven, then let us either quit the Name of *Chriſtians*, or act according to the ſupream Law-giver's, unrepealable Statutes, quite exploding what's undeniably borrowed from the *Pompilian* or *Pontifical Canons*.

Some Sheets have been printed off of what I intended to preſent to you, but the Meſſenger of the Preſs interrupted the procedure, and got me committed to *Newgate*, where I am now confin'd. There is nothing done, nor was intended to be done, but a fair Examination of thoſe things your Sermon invited to, which I had thought (if eſteemed Criminal) ſhould fall rather within the cognizance of Divines, than the men of Law; for me thinks the *Pandects* ſhould not be the Oracles of Religion, and that Temporal Statutes ſhould be ſo civil as to give precedency to the ſacred Records.

'Tis poſſible that Inquirers into Religion will look upon it as a prepoſterous proceeding, and diſagreeable to the Nature of the *Chriſtian Faith* to force doubting Perſons by Penalties to embrace

brace it; for that can never make them good Converts, but Hypocrites. May they not say that 'tis a horrid Disparagement to the Self-evidencing Light of the Gospel, if it cannot stop the Mouths of Gain-sayers, any other way than by the rigid Execution of Acts of State? I cannot find that Christ or his Disciples ever *Church-cursed* or *Newgated* scrupulous Consciences to Conformity.

My Confinement is for accepting your Invitation to hear both sides; and I appeal to you, whether it be candid to punish me for obeying a Guide of the Church? I look upon you (in honour) obliged to procure my Sheets (yet unfinished) a publick Passport, and to me my Liberty, else I must conclude it unfair, and that if the irresistible Logick of Goals grows *Al-a-mode*, it will make the Reformation, some pretend to, suspected to be very little meritorious of that Name.

Religion is a sacred thing, and has been most horribly abused by such as have superadded their own Inventions, or those Traditional Popperies received from our deceiv'd and superstitious Ancestors. I am satisfied you, as well as Dr. *Stillingfleet*, will own (or there's no debating with you) that the Scripture is our *Only Rule of Faith*; if so, pray let your scrupulous Consciences be won to Conformity by that. All men are not of equal capacity to apprehend things doubtful; for if they had been so, there had been no necessity of Preachers: and the methods of Convincing men is as plainly laid down in the Bible, as any thing there, *viz.* by *plain demonstrative Arguments*, *meek* and *winning Perswasions*, not the syllogisms of *Prisons*, *Pillories*, *&c.*

I beseech you in the fear of God, and as you will answer it to our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, That without respect to any other end than the good of Souls (as the Profession you take obliges you to) that you would treat scrupulous Consciences, as you would be dealt withal your self. If they have no Reason for their Dissent, and will without ground suffer Imprisonments

ſonments with all the ruinous Concomitants of ſo diſmal a Circumſtance, 'tis certain that *Bedlam* is more fit for them, than ſuch places of Confinement, as are appointed for men in their Wits; and by conſequence 'tis pity to be ſo ſevere with ſuch Simpletons. But if you will allow them any *Modicum* of Reaſon, than I appeal to all the *Guides of the Church*, whether it be not more conſonant to the Precepts of our ſoveraign Legiſlator, to confute them by his Rules, rather than by ſuch coercive Methods, which his Majeſty judg'd ineffectual in his *Declaration* of *Indulgence*, *March* 1672.

As Truth ſeeks no Corners nor Suborners, and as real Beauty will not be beholden to the artificial Dawbings of a Pencil, ſo the Chriſtian Religion (where profeſſed in its naked ſimplicity) needs no other Allurement to beget Proſelites than its own lovely and illuſtrious Features, altogether plain, honeſt, and every way amiable, void of all Meretricious Gawdery, or that Majeſtical Pomp which pleaſes only the external Senſe.

I have no Malignity againſt any Perſon whatſoever, much leſs againſt your Church, or any of its Members; all I deſire is, that *Scrupulous Conſciences*, who trouble not the Peace of the Nation, ſhould be dealt withal (at leaſt) as *weak Brethren*, according to *Rom.* 14. 1. and not ruin'd by Penalties for not ſwallowing what's impoſed under the Notion of *Decency* and *Order*, tho Eccentrick to the *Scheme* we have of it in our **only Rule of Faith.** *Sir*, I intreat you to excuſe this Trouble from a Stranger, who would fain be convinc'd by ſomething more like Divinity then *Newgate*, where any Meſſage from you ſhall be wellcome to

Your Humble Servant,

From the Preſs-Yard, Newgate, *the 8th of December*, 1683. Thomas De Laune.

January Die Nono, 1683.

Reverende Vir;

QVod ſemel atq; iterum Concionatus eras, Typiſq; mandaveras de Dubitanti Conſcientia, quotquot Diverſæ ſint ſententiæ circa quoſdam Ritus ac Ceremonias, ad utriuſq; partis Rationes Examinandas, ſatis publice vocitaverat.

Tacentibus alijs, in illa re, tibi parebam; non litigandi Cauſa (impar enim eſt Congreſſus inter te, tantum virum & me tantillum) ſed ut hujus modi Litem adimendi, ſicuti præceperas, adhibeatur occaſio.

Si propter tale (duntaxat) obſequium, me panas daturum, neſcio quot quibuſve modis, decretum fuerit; Nunquid nova vincendi ratio, ſacris paginis inaudita, apud quoſdam Anteſignanos exoritur?

Quid de his rebus ſentiendum eſſe videatur, ex ſacro Codice ac probatis Scriptoribus diſquirere propoſui, (te Cunctos vacillantes tam acriter invitante) ex illo Lumine ſemitarum, ex illa Lucerna (Pſal. 119. 105) Rationes aliquot hauſeram adverſus varios ac Multiplices Errores, qui in Eccleſiam Irrepſerunt.

Eâ ſolâ de cauſâ uſq; ad Carcerem, ubi nihil amabile eſt, adactus ſum. Utrum Iſtiuſmodi Argumenta valuerint ad veſtræ Concionis ὑποθεσεις, probandas ſub Judice Supremo lis ſit. Anve tali modo ullus ex dubitantibus in ſpirituale Cogi potuerit, Ovile, Judex eſto.

Nihil adverſus Regiam Majeſtatem, nihil de Regimine Civili, nihil contra Monarchiæ pacem aſſeritur. De Rituum ac Ceremoniarum

arum origine, deq; rebus quæ ſpecie veritatis, Etiamſi parum recte, in dubitantes Objiciuntur, ſola diſſertatio eſt.

Quid de me Curia decreverit neſcio. Fiat ſummi Patris Voluntas, Univerſis qui ſalutis humanæ largitorem ſecundum verbum ejus Colunt Pacem internam ac externam in hoc, æternamq; in futuro ſeculo Precatur

Thomas De Laune.

Ut Reſponſum aliquod, quod Theologum decet per dilectiſſimam meam Conjugem, uti promiſiſti remittas, obſecro.

Theſe two Letters were deliver'd to the *Dr.* and the Anſwer I receiv'd to the firſt, was in effect, *That if I had been impriſoned upon the account of anſwering his Book, he would do me any Kindneſs that became him:* To the ſecond he ſaid (which hearing no effect of the former I ſent him) *That he lookt upon himſelf unconcern'd*, or to that purpoſe, as not being mention'd in the Sheets he ſaw with the Recorder. To ſatisfie which Doubt, I ſent a printed Sheet, the very firſt of it, that makes it undiſputable, *viz.* that what I am charg'd with is an *Anſwer* to his *Call*. This is publiſhed (not out of any diſreſpect to that Gentleman, but) to invite him to give a fair Hearing to my Plea, and ſo to remove thoſe Obſtacles that lie in the way of *ſcrupulous Conſciences*, in order to a happy Union. I wiſh from my Heart that the Controverſie might conclude in that bleſſed effect.

The following Letter I ſent to the Recorder, Sir *Thomas Jenner*, which I publiſh for no other end, than that it may be a means to ſtir up the Minds of ſome judicious Guides of the Church of *England*, to urge *mild Arguments* to *doubting Perſons*; for as I am not, nor never was, nor intended to be concern'd in any Action to the Diſturbance of the publick Peace, ſo I have been, and ever ſhall be, in my mean Station, a hearty Well-wiſher to the Proſperity of theſe Nations under *His Majeſty's Government*.

To

To Sir *Thomas Jenner*, Knight, Recorder of *London*.

SIR;

YOu know I was committed Prisoner first to the *Compter* at *Woodstreet*, then to *Newgate* by your Warrant. In my Mittimus its said, *That I refused to give Bail*, which is a Mistake; for being asked by you, *Whether I would give Bail then?* I said, I could not, it being so late at night, when I had no opportunity to send to such as would bail me. And being ask't, *Whether I would give Bail the next Morning?* I said, I knew not whether I could or not, because I was not certain whether such to whom I might have made Application would do it, or not. This was no Sullenness nor Obstinacy in me, but what my real Apprehensions then were. Some Friends of mine (free-men of this City) went afterwards to be my Bail, but they were told, you were not at home. They made thereupon an Application to Sir *William Turner*, who referr'd them to you.

It is said in the Warrant, *That I confessed I was the Author of a Libel, entituled*, A Plea for the Non-conformists, *wherein are contain'd things dangerous to the Government*, which thus much, and no further is true: I confessed before you, that I deliver'd a *Manuscript* of my own writing to one *John How*, with that Title, in order to be printed, and that if the *Print* agreed with the *Manuscript*, I would own it — otherwise I could not, because the mis-placing of a Stop, the mis-printing of a Letter or Syllable, or some other Errata's of the Press, would alter the Sense, even to Contradiction of what was intended to be discussed; which was not as my Indictment words it (in a form of aggravating Terms) but in order to a plain disquisition of such things as Dr. *Calamy* from Pulpit and Press, invited Dissenters to inquire into, as you may see in his Book, called, *A Discourse of a scrupulous Conscience*. There is nothing of matters relating to the civil State in what I am charg'd with; for I am not concern'd with that: But if the *Guides of the Church* (as Dr. *Calamy* calls the benefic'd men of the *Church of England*) will make publick *Challenges*, they should receive *Objections*, without punishing the *Objectors*, whose (supposed) Crime is only for obeying them; and that, you know, *Sir*, is disagreeable to Justice.

If any thing I have done falls within the Lash of *English Laws*, *fiat Justitia*. But I am satisfy'd I have done nothing in this point unbecoming an *honest Subject*, a *Scholar*, a *Gentleman*, and which is worth all, a *Christian*. I commit the whole matter, with respect to this Dispute, to that supream Legislator, who is without exception just, and who will judge all that are subordinate to him. Which is all from, Sir, *Your Servant*,

Thomas De Laune

FINIS.